

## League of Schmalkald.

doctrine might be fatal to a strong national State; incompatible with Charles\* idea of transforming the empire into an hereditary monarchy. It was, at any rate, the only doctrine that squared with fact. Lutheranism was not responsible for its origin. Long before Luther appeared to defy pope, emperor, and Diet alike in the name of conscience, the princes had become territorial sovereigns. The old ecclesiastical constitution had been as favourable to the territorial tendency as the new; nay, it had proved as advantageous to the pope of Rome as to the pope of Wittenberg. Protestantism only took advantage of it to save itself from destruction. The Protestant princes were not elaborating a new doctrine; they were in reality taking advantage of an old one. That they had material as well as religious reasons for so doing is palpable enough, for Lutheranism undoubtedly tended to exalt their status as territorial sovereigns, as rulers by God's grace, and secularisation augmented their material resources. At the same time, it is only fair to remember that religious as well as secular considerations inspired the action of men like the Elector John, and his successor John Frederick, and the Landgrave Philip. The Saxon electors were assuredly no hypocrites, no mere political gamblers, and Landgrave Philip, though by no means an exemplary Christian in some of his actions, was certainly a Protestant by conviction. And the League of Schmalkald which united them (December 1530-February 1531) for six years in defence of their faith, and to which the Dukes of Brunswick-Liineburg and Grubenhagen, Prince Wolfgang of Anhalt, the Counts of Mansfeld, and eleven cities, including Constance, Ulm, Strassburg, Bremen, and Magdeburg, adhered, was entirely defensible in principle and purpose. It was defensive, not offensive. It was "not directed against the emperor, or any one else." But it asserted distinctly that the members of the league would mutually defend themselves against aggression on account of their religion, or even on any other pretext, by whomsoever made. It was a declaration to the emperor and the majority that might is not right in matters of belief, and that combination and resistance to the oppression of conscience, by even an emperor and a majority in the name of law, is a Christian duty.

Luther, indeed, in a letter to a citizen of Nurnberg (18th